BICOMPARTMENT BAGS FOR HAEMODYALISIS MACHINES AND A PROCESS FOR MANUFACTURING THEM

The present invention relates to haemodialysis equipment in general, and it more particularly relates to container bags for powdery saline compounds for the preparation of a liquid concentrate used in haemodialysis machines, and it more particularly refers to the use of its manufacturing procedure for a compartmented bag for haemodialysis machines, its main object being directed to obtaining a bag assembly that avoids the inner solution suction tubing, which carries a tubular filter mounted at the end that has been used in prior embodiments to preclude the dissolving powder from migrating out of the device before it is dissolved.

A further object of this invention resides in providing a system designed for the above objective which, due to its particular structure that divides the inside of the bag into two chambers, functions to prevent the powder in one of them from leaking during the handling prior to its being connected to the dialysis machine.

The invention solves these problems by providing a bag comprising the characteristics of claim 1. The invention also provides a process of manufacturing a bag according to the invention comprising the process steps of claim 12. Specific embodiments are the subject of the subclaims.

In order to solve the problems, the invention replaces the abovementioned filter to prevent the undissolved powder from leaking with a microperforated sheet acting as a partition between the zone or chamber where the undissolved powder is stored and the solution exiting through the second chamber, whereas the entrance filter is replaced by a cross-shaped valve-like device built into the stopper.

The advantages of the present invention are as follows:

a) Lower cost due to the elimination of the referred filters and the abovementioned exit tube for the solution mixed in the bag,

b) Insertion of the separating sheet defining two chambers;

c) Addition of the draining sheet in the exit chamber, which adopts a tie-like configuration, and which, due to its irregular surface, allows for the liquid to be drained between the two plastic sheets defining the chamber, such that by flowing through the microperforated zone it easily drains toward the outlet port and

d) Assembling the container in a single procedure at the production plant, with the consequent labour reduction resulting from the lesser number of operations to conduct.

Finally, the only operations to be carried out at the production plant are the testing, filling and sealing with a simple stopper, with no need to pre-assemble the discharge tube with its filter and positioning the inlet filter, this being a feature of the invention that minimizes the operative procedures required.

In summary, the invention further provides a new, extremely simple constructive procedure, to make it suitable to optimally reach its aim, including means to divide the container into two separate chambers, in one of which the powdered product to be converted into a concentrate used in haemodialysis is to be stored.

PREVIOUS ART

Bags prepared to contain the salt used to achieve the saline concentrate to be used in haemodialysis machines, consisting, e.g. of sodium bicarbonate (NaHCO3), for dialysis carried out with such bicarbonate are known in the previous art.

The most widespread bag is built from a tubular thermoplastic material sleeve, the coupling bearing of which must be inserted through one of the sleeves ends to be positioned such that it projects through a circular orifice around which it must be carefully sealed. On this portion, a second coupling component member must be affixed. Due to this type of construction, the bag must be then filled with the powder, with the ensuing risk of fouling the plastic film or sheet with the powder product, thus causing a defective sealing of the bag. As a consequence thereof, it is not possible to test the already full bag for water-tightness, which is the main drawback of this kind of element, apart from the difficulties encountered when assembling these pieces, which pieces need to be individually hand-made.

This construction was followed by a significant improvement, wherein said bearing or bushing is comprised of two portions including the lid, for which there has been a commonly owned Argentinian patent application filed under No. P 010104208, covering a system for haemodialysis bags consisting of a pair of members: one first annular member attached to the bag and a second member connectable with the first one communicating the outside and inside of the bag, wherein it extends by means of a conduct coupled to a tubing extending toward the bottom of the bag, and including a special filter on one end, for the purpose of avoiding the undissolved particles to be entrained in the solution being withdrawn.

In the previous art, the petitioner further owns Argentinian patents Nos. 229,630 and 235,076, each relating to a preserver Bag, No. 251,932 to a Serum flask and No. AR011468 to a Sterile connector. EP 0278100, referring to a system to prepare a medicinal fluid by mixing at least one powder in water and a cartridge to be used therewith is also known in this field. The cartridge it refers

to is different from this invention and it can only be considered as a previous step not forestalling the new construction.

It is worth mentioning that there are other numerous patents and utility models in the field of the present invention in several countries, partly by the petitioner, such as DE 92 17 989 U1, DE 91 12 569 U1, DE 38 44 174 A1, DE 88 13 659 U1, DE 86 33 262 U1, etc., which would be too unduly lengthy to enumerate, since they cover different aspects of the subject matter.

In the present invention, new constructive improvements have been achieved which, due to their simplicity and economy, represent a significant advancement in this type of elements.

For that purpose, the bag is made from thermoplastic laminar sheets of a suitable gauge, which will form the outer lateral layers of the bag, in one of each the special bushing is electronically welded, together with and adjacent to a thinner sheet that has a screen part at the distal end, near the bottom of the bag. The assembly is completed by means of a woven sheet of a thermoplastic material inserted from the contour of the bushing to said distal end, and the bag is finished by the co-sealing of the three laminar layers around the entire contour. The woven tie-shaped layer does not need to be affixed around its contour, since it is even more convenient for it to be free in the inner space resulting from the perimetral tight seal.

This embodiment, apart from the remarkable simplification of the bag structure, which makes its construction considerably simpler, divides the interior of the bag into two chambers, one of which is filled with the powdered bicarbonate through which the diluting water must circulate; it succeeds in eliminating the filter with its tubing, which is replaced by a simple membrane which has a screen configuration at the required position and which may have the contour of a stripe. The membrane may be produced by microperforation,

but it may also be a separate part that is joined to the separation sheet. The construction allows to verify the water-tightness of each unit prior to its filling with the powdered saline material, with the additional advantage that it favours the operation, thus achieving a good heat sealing of the contour due to the fact that the possibility of it being altered by the presence of the salt granules or particles which would later cause leaks is avoided, and it avoids the blockage problem for the suction of the dilution due to the drop caused by the machine pump suction, which could bind or attach the laminar layers comprising the solution suction chamber together.

The bicompartment bag of the present invention is thus comprised of a laminar thermoplastic body formed by two outer laminar layers, in one of which layers the access bushing is affixed, which body is divided into two chambers by means of a separating sheet provided with a screen-like part at its distal end at the bottom of the bag and which is in cooperating relationship with said bushing by being affixed to the annular plane of the bushing end projecting into the bag. Of said two chambers, a first chamber is in communication with the bushing with its related solvent inlet, and it is partially filled with the powdered solute, whereas the second chamber is provided inside with a woven thermoplastic material layer freely extending from the bushing to the bottom of the chamber and wherein said bushing provides the means for the exit of the solution achieved after passing through the laminar filter comprised in said separating sheet.

The bag manufacturing process is carried out in the following steps:

Continually circulating three laminar bands of a suitable width and thickness superimposed on three levels,

Perforating two of said bands and forming a screen in the interposed separating sheet,

Positioning and welding the entry nozzle;

Inserting the shorter drain segment;

Perimetral welding and cutting;

Quality testing of each unit;

Filling the corresponding chamber with the solute to be dissolved,

Sealing the bag by means of a lid comprised in the entry bushing or nozzle.

The procedure disclosed in the precedent paragraph adopts a step sequence believed to be one of the practical ways to carry out the container manufacturing process of the present disclosure, by way of illustrative example only, wherein the simplification of the required methods are clearly apparent due to the speed of its automated construction in some of the stages.

For the present invention consisting of a haemodialysis bicompartment bag and a process for manufacturing it to be clearly understood and so that it can be easily practised, a preferred embodiment is given below, with reference to the accompanying drawings, by way of example only and not limiting of the invention, the components of which can be selected among various equivalents without departing from the principles of the invention as set forth herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the Figures accompanying the present technical-legal disclosure:

Figure 1 is a perspective, exploded, schematic view of the bag components, spaced apart from each other, that shows their relative position.

Figure 2 is a perspective schematic view of the bag already assembled.

Figure 3 is a side schematic view, with half of it being a diameter cut, which shows the way the bushing or nozzle component is affixed to the cover sheet and the separating sheet the bag is comprised of. The sheets are shown in cross section.

Figure 4 is an elevation schematic side view of the stopper, half of which is shown in cross section, wherein other features of the bushing shown in the previous figure can be seen.

Figure 5 is a blown-up, cutaway partial detail of the bushing with its complement or stopper snapped on.

Figure 6 is another blown-up partial detail of the stopper of Figure 5 corresponding to its sealing valve.

Figure 7 is a blown-up, cross section detail of the bag sealing valve.

Figure 8 is a side view of the bag for haemodialysis machines of the present invention.

In said figures, equal reference numbers show equal or equivalent parts.

DISCLOSURE:

According to Figure 1, the bag is comprised of the following mutually cooperating components: Two strong outer laminar layers –1- 2- of the bag, which may consist of simple polyethylene films, mixed polyethylene and polyesther or polyethylene and nylon laminates or any other mixed laminate that involves an operative improvement and a lower cost compared to using a polyethylene-only laminate. In one of the two side layers, there is a circular bore – 3- around which the bushing –4- is tightly attached –S1-.

A shorter inner layer –5- is subsequently inserted, which layer is relatively thicker, woven or injected of a thermoplastic material, adopting a tie-like shape, or the like, provided with a semi-circular recess – 6-, which layer is to be floatingly positioned between the outer sheet –1- and a third thinner separating inner sheet –7-, which is provided with a circular orifice –8- and a screen-like stripe –9- at one end. This sheet is attached at the edge of the orifice –8- to the terminal planar lip –10- of the bushing –4- by means of a suitable welding, adhesive or the like –S2-

Figure 2 shows the assembly, once its components have been positioned and affixed, e.g. by welding, all around its contour –S3-.

The bushing acts as an entry nozzle for the solvent water and an exit for the solution, which is seen in greater detail in Figure 3. It is configured as an annular body –4- with a discoid base of a larger diameter –11- wherein a radial tube is positioned –12- communicating its central axial space –13- with the outside through said discoid base. In said inner cylindrical cavity of the bushing there are two projecting threads –14- and a third one –15- adjacent to the outlet plane which is somewhat wider than the two previous ones. On the outlet, which has a larger diameter lip –16-, there is a small annular recess adjacent to thread –15-.

On this bushing –4-, a complementary member referred to as lid or stopper –17- is snapped on, as shown in Figure 4, which lid has been designed to effect the coupling between the bag and the outlet member provided in the haemodialysis machine (not shown), providing the inlet of water for the solution and the exit of the product of the dilution.

In this complementary member there is a cylindrical central tube –18-, which is inwardly stepwise in its mouth, defining the water inlet of the bag. It is surrounded by another higher cylinder –19- at the bottom of which there is at least one radial branch –20- towards the perimeter of the member, wherein a peripheral groove –21- is disposed. The outer contour of the member –17-, complementary of the bushing –4- provides a larger diameter portion –22- followed by a lesser diameter portion –23- to effect the water-tight coupling with the bushing –4-, in the inner cavity of which –13- it is affixed with the functional cooperation of the threads or ridges –24- of a larger gauge and those –25- of a lesser width, that are found around its contour.

The complementary piece, which serves as a stopper once the bag has been filled with sodium bicarbonate, is provided with a valve –26- which seals the axial water inlet tube –18-.

Its unique structure is shown in a greater scale in Figure 7. Therein it can be seen that it consists of a thin sheet –26- wherein some lesser strength lines –27- are provided in a cross-shaped configuration and ending in grooves –28- penetrating to a depth in the order of one half of the valve disc thickness –26-. These grooves are disposed as a square engraved in the circular space of the tube –18- wherein the lines of a lesser strength come to an end.

Figure 8 provides a side view of the bag, after it has been assembled and the filling operation of chamber –A- with the sodium bicarbonate salt C to be diluted has been completed, thus being ready to be stoppered by the second complementary member –17-, now acting as a stopper. Adjacent to it there is chamber –B- through which the dilution to be effected is withdrawn once it is mounted on the machine.

OPERATION

Having thus set forth the various components of this embodiment of the invention, and their nature disclosed, the disclosure is hereinafter complemented by a functional and operative review of its parts and the outcome they produce.

All of the details comprised in the invention and the way to assemble the same are clearly established in the process. Once the bag is finished, it is already operative to be subjected to water-tightness and strength tests, which are carried out under at least twice the work pressure. This allows for the verification of the quality standards of each bag and for disposing of such units not meeting the required specifications without undue financial damage. Only then are they sterilized and filled with the required amount of the product to be

dissolved, which in this case is Na bicarbonate. The bags are then in the configuration shown in Figure 8, before the moment when the corresponding lids –17- are snapped on, for which purpose the threads and recesses machined in both pieces cooperatingly work. Inside the outlet of the hemodialysis machine there is a conical punch that opens the valve-26 – by tearing the lesser strength lines –27- and separating them by virtue of their flexibility, for which the grooves –28-, acting as hinges, allow for the motion of the resulting triangular fragments, thus allowing for the circulation of the solvent water. This valve has prevented the salt from leaking, since it is originally intact in its closed position, and allows for the inspection for any manipulation of the units without any problem whatsoever.

The full bags, ready for use, already identified and labelled, are packaged for their intended use in the aforementioned haemodialysis machines.

At the time of use, the bag is connected by its bushing and stopper in the outlet provided by the machine, by gently pushing it in, for which purpose the flexible but firm configuration of the complementary stopper member –17- is useful.

After the circulation of water into the chamber –A- has been established where the solute product is contained and isolated, the dissolution starts, the solution will be flowing through the filter found at the bottom of the bag, which is comprised of the screen-like stripe –9- and penetrating into chamber –B- from where, circulating among the thin gaps through the woven layer –5-, it will be withdrawn through the orifices –12- the groove –21- and tubes –20- and –19- to enter the machine, where it will be processed at the time the concentration reaches the anticipated value.

From the aforementioned disclosure arises the way the bicarbonate salt has been kept intact, confined into chamber –A- of the bag, without interfering

with the assembly thereof, which optimises the procedure of affixing the bushing and the perimetral contour of the sheets from which the bag is made, allowing for a complete automation of the process. The way the quality testing of each bag has been allowed before its filling and the way an automatic connection is established with the machine using the bags, avoiding in advance the potential fouling of chamber –B- upon the suction of the solution by the machine pump, are illustrative of the advantage provided by the invention.

Having thus reviewed one of the possible construction leading to the invention and the way it operates, and its specific application being further understood, this disclosure is hereby completed by the summary of the invention contained in the following claims.